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NSC BRIEFING 21 May 1958

SAUDI ARABIA

I. Physical infirmity of Saud and Faysal adds to uncertainty of country's political future.

A. Saud taken to ARAMCO hospital Dhahran on 17 May suffering from cardio-vascular ailment which, although not immediately serious, has left him extremely unwell.

1. Saud deeply worried about his health, is considering trip to West Germany for treatment.

2. Saud does not appear to appreciate political implication of departure following recent reduction of his authority.

B. Faysal, whose authority as chief executive officer of government was affirmed in 12 May decree, has been chronically ill for years.

1. Faysal still recuperating from two operations, last summer and fall (gall stones and ulcers).

II. In absence of predetermined settlement of the succession, death or incapacity of King and Faysal could result in increased instability susceptible of exploitation by the UAR because there is no "number 3" man.

A. In Bedouin tradition successor usually chosen by family council.

1. There are many contenders among numerous brothers and sons of King and Faysal. The 33 royal brothers, rather than the sons, now appear to have assumed dominant role.

2. Of these Mohammed (who originally refused allegiance to Saud), Fahad (min of education) and Sultan (min of communications) are most prominent.

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